

GOLDEN GAZETTE

A Monthly Newspaper for Senior Adults in the Fairfax Area

May 2012

Serving Seniors for 35 Years

VOL. 36, NO. 1

Health Insurance Rate Hikes Deemed Excessive

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently deemed health insurance premium increases in nine states—including Virginia—"unreasonable" under a new rate review authority granted by the Affordable Care Act. Under the law, insurance companies are required to justify rate increases of 10 percent or higher. The department ordered the two companies cited to rescind their rate increase, issue refunds to consumers, or publicly explain their refusal to do so.

The department also released a report showing that, since the rate review program took effect in 2011, health insurers have proposed fewer double-digit rate increases. Furthermore, more states have taken an active role in reducing rate increases, and consumers in all states are getting straight answers from their insurance companies when their rates are raised by 10 percent or more. As of March 10, 2012, the justifications and analysis of 186 double-digit rate increases for plans covering 1.3 million people have been posted at *HealthCare.gov*, resulting in a decline in rate increases. According to the report, in the

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This is an abridged version of the *Golden Gazette*. Policy prohibits publishing the ads that are included in the print version. If you would like to receive the print version on a monthly basis, please email kathy.wilson@fairfaxcounty.gov. Large-print and recorded formats also are available. They are free!

Older Americans Month *Never Too Old to Play!*

May is Older Americans Month, a perfect opportunity to show our appreciation for the older adults in our community. Since 1963, communities across the nation have joined in the annual commemoration of Older Americans Month—a proud tradition that shows our nation's commitment to celebrating the contributions and achievements of older Americans.

The theme for Older Americans Month 2012—*Never Too Old to Play!*—puts a spotlight on the important role older adults play in sharing their experience, wisdom, and understanding, and passing on that knowledge to other generations in a variety of significant ways. This year recognizes the value that older adults continue to bring to our communities through spirited participation in social and faith groups, service organizations, and other activities.

As large numbers of baby boomers reach retirement age, many communities have increased their efforts to provide meaningful opportunities for older adults—many of whom remain physically and socially active through their 80s and beyond. Current trends show that people over age 60 account for an ever-growing percentage of

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NOTE: The TTY number for all contacts is 711.



GOLDEN GAZETTE

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FAX: 703-449-8689
Website: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices.

The *Golden Gazette* is a free, monthly newspaper dedicated to serving persons age 60 and over in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church.

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DEADLINES

ALWAYS the first of the month one month in **advance** (for ads, ad payments, and announcements). **The next deadline is May 1 for the June issue.**

ADDRESS ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Although the *Golden Gazette* accepts limited paid advertisements, reader contributions are critical to ensure continuation of the publication. We are very grateful to all of you who do send contributions, regardless of the amount (the average contribution is about \$7). **Please note that contributions are entirely voluntary.**

If you have an address change, are receiving duplicates, or if you would like to make a contribution, please complete the form below and mail to: ***Golden Gazette, Area Agency on Aging, 12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 708, Fairfax, VA 22035-1104.*** Checks should be made payable to *County of Fairfax*. Please list your current address below or attach your mailing label and check the appropriate lines. If you prefer to call about address changes, the number is **703-324-5633**.

____ Contribution check attached.
____ I am **NOT** currently on your mailing list. Please add my name and address.
____ I am already on your mailing list.
____ I am moving. My new address in the Fairfax area will be:
NAME _____
CURRENT ADDRESS _____ Zip: _____
NEW ADDRESS (if applicable) _____ Zip: _____
TELEPHONE (in case we have a question) _____

The names and addresses of persons receiving the *Golden Gazette* are subject to disclosure pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, VA Code Sec. 2.1-340 thru 346.1. Inquiries or complaints concerning this policy should be directed to the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, 12011 Government Center Parkway, #708, Fairfax, VA 22035-1104.

The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging contracts with VRS Company, Inc., Great Falls, VA, for printing and mailing services.

May COA Meeting

The next meeting of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging will be **Wednesday, May 16**, at 1 p.m., at the Mason District Governmental Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale. A public comment period is held at the beginning of each meeting. ***(Note: The Commission normally meets on the third Wednesday of each month, except August.)***

For additional information, to be placed on the mailing list, or to request special accommodations, please call **703-324-5403**, TTY 711.

Commission on Aging Corner

I am Maureen Renault and serve as the Commission on Aging representative for the Sully District. I can be contacted at mlrenault@verizon.net or at **703-623-6311**. The Sully District is one of three western county districts bordering Loudoun and Prince William counties.

During the 18 years I have lived here, changes in my life circumstances have provided me a broad experience of living in this community.

Six years ago, my mother moved into an independent senior community in the area, and agreed to sell her car and use the various transportation options available in Fairfax County. This column is a review of those transportation options.

Independent in the beginning, mother and I enjoyed using the following fixed-route services such as the multiple bus systems in the area:

- 1) Fairfax Connector—www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector, **703-339-7200**;
- 2) Reston Internal Bus System (RIBS)—www.linkinfo.org/reston.cfm, **703-435-5465**;
- 3) City of Fairfax CUE Bus—www.fairfaxva.gov/cuebus/cuebus.asp, **703-385-7859**.

For those times when we needed to get from the bus station to home, we used the Metro system and the Metrobus system—www.wmata.com/bus, **202-637-7000**. These systems offer cost-effective rides and the Fairfax Connector, City of Fairfax CUE, and Metrobus offer discounts for riders 65 years of age and older.

Fairfax County also offers free travel training for older adults who want to learn how to ride the bus system independently—www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs/mattbus.htm, **703-877-5600**.

For trips that could not be made by the bus system, we invested in discounted taxicab coupon booklets (coupon booklets worth \$33 at a cost of \$20 per booklet). These allowed us to ride privately with one of several taxi vendors supporting the program, Seniors-on-the-Go—www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs/seniors.htm, **703-877-5800**. This program has income limitations as well as a limit on how many coupon booklets you can buy annually. There are no

restrictions on where riders can travel using this program.

As my mother's dementia increased, she became unable to live independently and moved into our home. We began using services offered by the county supporting individuals and caregivers with cognitive and developmental issues including senior centers, Senior Plus, and adult day health care center programs. Transportation is included by Fastran—www.fairfaxcounty.gov/rec/Fastran, **703-222-9764**. This provided my mother the enjoyment of leaving home daily to enjoy fellowship and activities at the centers.

A new service available to help residents with transportation options, Reach-a-Ride, provides information in English and Spanish about specialized transportation options for older adults with links to programs and services. They can be reached at **1-855-732-2427** or at www.reacharide.org.

The journey continues, and along with the ongoing physical and cognitive changes, so do the choices we make for staying mobile in Fairfax County. An open mind and the smallest bit of courage to try a new way made a significant difference in our quality of life.



**For information on volunteering,
call the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging's
Volunteer Intake Line at
703-324-5406, TTY 711, or go to
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/
olderadultservices/volunteer-
solutions.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/volunteer-solutions.htm).**

Habitat for Humanity's Brush With Kindness Program

Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia is seeking applicants for the program, *A Brush With Kindness*. The program is dedicated to preserving or restoring the vibrant character of neighborhoods in Northern Virginia through assistance to low-income families with exterior home repairs.

Habitat will help low-income homeowners impacted by age, disability, and family circumstances who struggle to maintain the exterior of their homes to revitalize their homes and improve their communities.

A Brush with Kindness is part of Habitat's broader holistic community development strategy, which assists communities as well as families, and creates affordable housing improvements.

Habitat of Northern Virginia will complete remodeling, renovation, and revitalization projects costing up to \$5,000 using volunteers. They will minimize costs to homeowners through donated materials, community or corporate sponsorships, and no-interest loans. Repairs include, but are not limited to the following:

- Exterior painting
- Ramps and accessible doorways
- Fence repair
- Siding repair
- Weatherization and waterproofing

Applicants who would like to participate in the program must:

- Own and occupy a home that could benefit from short-term exterior improvements. (Must have issues with weatherization, safety, accessibility, or livability.)
- Earn an income between 30% and 80% of the area median income.
- Be a willing partner, with sweat equity if able, or in creative ways if unable.
- Be unable to afford to pay for repairs by conventional means.
- Possess current homeowner's insurance.

Habitat encourages homeowners who are able to help work with the repair team on their homes. In exchange, a zero-interest loan with a repayment plan will be granted that will avoid an excessive burden on the homeowner. The projects will be subsidized through sponsorships from faith groups, community organizations, grants, and other sources of funding.

To apply for *A Brush With Kindness*, download an application at www.habitatnova.org or call Romana Sanchez at **703-521-9890, ext. 112** or email rsanchez@habitatnova.org.



Scam Warning

Residents are being warned about a scam that occurs when someone who claims to be a jury duty coordinator calls a person to verify they received a summons for jury duty, and that a warrant has been issued for their arrest. If the person states they never received a summons, the scammer asks for their Social Security number and date of birth so he or she can verify the information and cancel the arrest warrant. The person's identity may be compromised by providing this information. Intimidation is used to obtain information from callers pretending to be with the court system.

The fraud has been reported so far in eleven states.

For more information, go to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's website at www.fbi.gov.

ESTATE PLANNING

Gifts to Charity by Will or Trust

by David A. Fontanella, Attorney

Question: I am working on the details of my estate plan and I want to make a gift to charity. But, friends have told me that this may complicate the probate of a will or the administration of a trust. Do you have any suggestions?

Answer: Your friends are referring to the problems and pitfalls that may arise when your personal representative attempts to carry out your bequest. Here are some thoughts to consider:

1. You must be specific in identifying the charity. There may be no problem when you name a familiar donee, like your church or your fraternal lodge, but gifts to large organizations may run into difficulty. In one case, a gift to "local Boy Scouts" turned up dozens of potential recipients in councils, regions, and districts and hundreds of Boy Scout troops in the municipal area. In another case, a gift for "cancer research" required the executor to review dozens of cancer organizations and societies. It's important to do your homework because ambiguity in identifying the beneficiary may become an unplanned burden for your executor and cost your estate time and money.

2. Be sure the beneficiary of your charitable gift wants your money. Most large charities insist that your gift be entirely unconditional. So, if you make a bequest to your alma mater for "trees to be planted near the library," you should speak to the college office that handles charitable gifts. Trees may not be in their master plan, but they might really appreciate a gift to help with the renovation of their library. In another case, a man left a gift to establish an annual scholarship at his old high school. But, his requirements for winning the prize were so arduous that the school asked the executor to appear before a

school board meeting in order to discuss the scholarship rules.

3. When gifts are made to reduce estate taxes, care must be taken to insure that the charity is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a charitable institution. It would be wise to make an Internet request or letter of inquiry for the charity's official IRS designation as part of your estate planning.

4. When a gift is made to a charitable institution, the charity often may make a request for a copy of the will or trust as well as the accounting for the will or trust estate. The employees of some charities can be very aggressive and may challenge distribution of an estate. In one case, a decedent prepared a handwritten note to his executors shortly before he died. The note increased the bequest to a beneficiary and thereby reduced the bequest in his will to the charity. The charity went to court seeking to overturn the handwritten note as an invalid codicil. It sought the larger amount provided for them in the will. The court, however, ruled for the beneficiary and the charity appealed. Thus, a rather simple will with only two beneficiaries became a lawsuit because the testator's intent was left open to challenge and the estate was made to bear the costs of litigation.

NOTE: *This article is not intended as legal advice and no one should rely upon it without consulting legal counsel. If you have an estate planning question you would like to see answered in this column, please email David Fontanella at fontane@cox.net or call him at 703-317-1927.*

Join a Senior Center—Let the Fun Begin!

Fairfax County residents age 55 and over may join any of the 14 senior centers sponsored by the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. There is an annual membership fee (for information, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs; call **703-324-4600**, or email ncs@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Senior centers offer classes, health and wellness programs, computer/Internet access, trips, and opportunities to socialize with others and stay connected with your community. Lunch is available with a suggested donation between \$2 and \$6 based on age and income. Lunch reservations must be made at least 1 day in advance. Transportation may be available by Fastran bus at a nominal charge. Call your nearest senior center for information. The TTY number for all centers is 711.

The City of Fairfax(www.fairfaxva.gov) and the City of Falls Church(www.fallschurchva.gov) also sponsor senior centers and have their monthly schedules online.

		<u>Other Locations for Senior Activities/Meals</u>
Bailey's Bailey's Community Center 5920 Summers Lane Bailey's Crossroads, VA 22041 703-820-2131	Lincolnia+ 4710 North Chambliss St. Alexandria, VA 22312 703-914-0223	City of Fairfax Senior Center 4401 Sideburn Road Fairfax, VA 22030 703-359-2487
Burke/West Springfield Center Without Walls David R. Pinn Community Center 10225 Zion Drive Fairfax, VA 22030 703-250-9181	Little River Glen+ 4001 Barker Court Fairfax, VA 22032 703-503-8703	City of Falls Church Senior Center 223 Little Falls Street Falls Church, VA 22046 703-248-5020
Herndon+ 873 Grace Street Herndon, VA 20170 703-464-6200	Lorton+ 7722 Gunston Plaza Lorton, VA 22079 703-550-7195	David R. Pinn Community Center 10225 Zion Drive Fairfax, VA 22032 703-250-9181
Hollin Hall 1500 Shenandoah Road Alexandria, VA 22308 703-765-4573	Pimmit Hills 7510 Lisle Avenue Falls Church, VA 22043 703-734-3338	Gum Springs Community Center 8100 Fordson Road Alexandria, VA 22306 703-360-6088
James Lee+ James Lee Community Center 2855-A Annandale Road Falls Church, VA 22042 703-534-3387	South County+ South County Govt. Center 8350 Richmond Hwy, #325 Alexandria, VA 22309 703-704-6216	Huntington Community Center 5751 Liberty Drive Alexandria, VA 22303 703-960-1917
Kingstowne 6488 Landsdowne Center Alexandria, VA 22315 703-339-7676	Sully+ 5690 Sully Road Centreville, VA 20120 703-322-4475	Korean Central Senior Center <i>Open Tuesdays & Fridays</i> 8526 Amanda Place Vienna, VA 22180 703-303-3939
Lewinsville+ 1609 Great Falls Street McLean, VA 22101 703-442-9075	Wakefield Audrey Moore RECenter 8100 Braddock Road Annandale, VA 22003 703-321-3000	

+ Indicates a facility with a Senior+ program

Health Insurance *cont. from p. 1*

last quarter of 2011, states reported that premium increases dropped by 4.5 percent, and in states like Nevada, premiums actually declined.

HHS determined, after independent expert review, that two insurance companies have proposed unreasonable health insurance premium increases in nine states—Arizona, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, **Virginia**, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The excessive rate hikes would affect over 42,000 residents across these nine states.

In these nine states, the insurers have requested rate increases as high as 24 percent. These increases were reviewed by independent experts to determine whether they are reasonable. In this case, HHS determined that the rate increases were unreasonable, because the insurer would be spending a low percentage of premium dollars on actual medical care and quality improvements, and because the justifications were based on unreasonable assumptions.

Most rates are reviewed by states, and many states have the authority to reject unreasonable premium increases. Since the passage of the health care law, the number of states with this authority increased from 30 to 37, with several states extending existing “prior authority” to new markets.

The rate review program has made insurance companies explain their increases, and more than 180 have been posted publicly and are open for consumer comment on companyprofiles.healthcare.gov.

This initiative is one of many in the health care law to ensure that insurance companies play by the rules, prohibiting them from dropping coverage when a person gets sick, billing consumers into bankruptcy through annual or lifetime limits, and soon, discriminating against anyone with a pre-existing condition.

Information on the determinations is at: www.companyprofiles.healthcare.gov/. The rate review report is at: www.healthcare.gov/

law/resources/reports/rate-review03222012a.html. General information about rate review is at: www.healthcare.gov/law/features/costs/rate-review/.

Single Seniors Champagne Brunch Sunday, May 27, 12 p.m.

Enjoy the grace and spirit of the Hoku Hula dancers and Kanaka of Hawaii, appearing at the Ft. Myer Officers’ Club in the first floor Lamplighter Room.

Join us the last Sunday of every month for an elegant brunch, including free champagne, orange juice, coffee, and desserts. Meet other singles who live near you, dine, and socialize. This event is open to all. Future volunteer entertainers, speakers, etc., are welcome.

Photo ID required at the Wright Gate, end of N. Meade Street and Marshall Drive, adjacent to the Iwo Jima Memorial, and the Hatfield Gate, Washington Blvd. Free parking at the Club, 214 Jackson St. All proceeds support the Officers’ Club.

For reservations, call Seena at **703-530-4884**.

Transportation Programs

Seniors On-The-Go! is Fairfax County’s discount taxi voucher program for adults who are 65 years of age or older, residents of Fairfax County or the City of Fairfax, and have an annual income of \$40k or less as an individual or \$50k or less as a married couple. Participants are eligible for **16** \$33 discounted coupon booklets per year at a cost of \$20 each.

To register, call **703-877-5800**.

TaxiAccess is Fairfax County’s discount taxi voucher program for individuals who are residents of Fairfax County or the City of Fairfax and registered users of MetroAccess. Participants are eligible for **8** \$33 discounted coupon booklets per year at a cost of \$10 each.

To register, call **703-877-5800**.

New Lifetime Leadership Program Accepting Applications

The Lifetime Leadership Program (LLP) is offering a training program to retired professionals who want to invest their experience and skills into helping the community.

LLP is accepting applicants for its fall 2012 program. It is recruiting men and women who have retired from full-time professional work. Participants will enjoy new social and community connections while learning more about Fairfax County and its needs, and convert a wealth of knowledge into meaningful roles.

The program is five days spread over a 10-week period, and begins Wednesday, September 19. Applications are available at www.LeadershipFairfax.org and by calling **703-752-7504**.

Information sessions will be held as follows:

- Thursday, June 14, 11 a.m.-12 p.m., TEQCorner, 1616 Anderson Rd., McLean
- Wednesday, August 1, 11 a.m.-12 p.m., Leadership Fairfax, 8230 Old Courthouse Rd., Suite 350, Vienna.

Topics for the classes include:

- Self-discovery
- Social entrepreneurship and the experience dividend
- Fairfax County Government boards, agencies, and commissions
- Engagement in a community-wide service project
- Community volunteer needs and nonprofit fairs/roundtable
- Commencement luncheon

The program is sponsored by a partnership that includes Leadership Fairfax and Volunteer Fairfax, and includes programs presented by Leadership Fairfax, Volunteer Fairfax, George Mason University, and the Positive Aging Coalition.

For more information or to RSVP for one of the sessions, call Moniek at **703-752-7504** or email moniek@leadershipfairfax.org.

Older Americans Month *cont. from p. 1*

participants in community service positions, faith-based organizations, online social networking, and arts and recreational groups.

Lifelong participation in social, creative, and physical activities has proven health benefits, including retaining mobility, muscle mass, and cognitive abilities. But older adults are not the only ones who benefit from their engagement in community life. Studies show their interactions with family, friends, and neighbors across generations enrich the lives of everyone involved. Young people who have significant relationships with a grandparent or older adults report that these relationships helped shape their values, goals, and life choices, and gave them roots and a sense of identity.

Older Americans Month is a great opportunity to show special appreciation for some of the community's most beloved residents.

To find out about services for older adults, adults with disabilities, caregivers, and volunteer opportunities, call the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging at **703-324-7948** or go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices.htm.

Shepherd's Center of Annandale-Springfield

What: Green Springs Gardens Tour

When: Thursday, May 3, 10 a.m.

Where: Leave from Annandale United Methodist Church, 6935 Columbia Pike, Annandale

Cost: \$10

Registration: Call **703-941-1419**.

Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke

What: Lunch N' Life and Golden Rays Tap Dancing Ensemble

When: Thursday, May 17, 12-2 p.m.

Where: Church of the Good Shepherd, 9350 Braddock Rd., Fairfax

Cost: \$8

Registration: Call **703-323-4788**.

Volunteer Opportunities

Capital Caring is a nonprofit hospice and palliative care organization looking for volunteers to give companionship and respite to patients and families. Opportunities include being a liaison between a patient's faith community and Capital Caring, being a hairdresser, and more. Contact the volunteer coordinator at **703-531-2398** or go to www.capitalcaring.org.

Fairfax County's Volunteer Solutions program has the following volunteer opportunities:

- Volunteer drivers to take people in the Falls Church region to and from medical appointments;
 - Spanish-speaking assistants for socialization and recreational activities at Lewinsville Adult Day Health Care Center in McLean;
 - Grocery shopper for older female in Alexandria, preferably Farsi-speaking, but not required;
 - Volunteer fluent in American Sign Language for social visiting and driving for errands/groceries in Centreville;
 - Respite caregivers in Alexandria and Lorton to give family caregivers a break by providing companionship and supervision (no personal care). Commitment is 6 hours/month, with flexible scheduling;
 - Grocery shoppers, drivers, and social visitors in Falls Church;
 - Pianist to play music from the '40s and '50s for a participant sing-along, 1-2 x/month at the Herndon Harbor Adult Day Health Center;
 - Meals on Wheels drivers in Annandale, Fairfax, Falls Church, Franconia, McLean, and Vienna/Oakton; and for the Vietnamese and Korean routes;
 - Meals on Wheels group coordinator for the Vienna-Oakton-Dunn Loring route;
- Meals on Wheels volunteers may choose to drive weekly, biweekly, monthly, or be a substitute. Meals are generally delivered Monday through Friday, between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

For more information on any of the Volunteer Solutions opportunities, call the Volunteer Intake Line at 703-324-5406; email

volunteersolutions@fairfaxcounty.gov or go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/volunteer-solutions.htm.

The **Herndon Senior Center** is looking for a volunteer Web coordinator. Duties include monitoring and responding to advisory council website inquiries and assisting in posting website content. The center is located at 873 Grace Street, Herndon. Contact Ruth Junkin at **703-464-6202** or email Ruth.Junkin@FairfaxCounty.gov, or go to www.herndonseniorcenter.org.

The **Humane Society of Fairfax County** needs volunteers who are interested in helping abandoned and homeless animals find a forever home. The following opportunities are available: office administration work, sorting items in the thrift store, walking dogs, petting cats, or designing posters. Call **703-385-7387**, or go to www.hsfc.org.

The **Shepherd's Center of Annandale-Springfield** needs volunteers to drive seniors in Annandale, Springfield, Falls Church, and Alexandria to medical appointments. Flexible schedule. Call **703-941-1419** or email shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com.

The **Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church** needs volunteer drivers for area seniors to and from medical and therapy appointments. The Shepherd's Center continues to receive an unusually large number of requests. Call **703-506-2199**.

To have a volunteer opportunity considered for this column, please email or fax your submission to **Tanya Erway** by the first of the month one month in advance.

Email: tanya.erway@fairfaxcounty.gov

Phone: 703-324-5407

Fax: 703-324-3583

Free Facebook Class

Facebook is easier and safer than you think. Join instructor Kyla Lupo, from Smart Again Tutoring, for this FREE class and learn the details about staying safe and having fun. Lost your password? Getting too many emails? Confused about privacy and security settings? This class will help!

The class is offered on Thursday, May 3, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., 1-3 p.m., or 4-6 p.m. (choose one), at 10721 Main St., Suite 304, Fairfax.

To register or for more information, call Kyla Lupo at **571-357-4022**, or email kyla@smartagain.com.



Telephone Support Group for Caregivers of Older Adults

Are you a caregiver who would like to join a support group without having to leave home? Get helpful information, share your experiences, and gain emotional support from others on the telephone.

The support group meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 7-8 p.m. Below are the upcoming topics:

May 8: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Caregiving With Relatives and Friends

June 12: Stressed Out and Overwhelmed—What's a Caregiver To Do?

To register or for more information, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/caregiver.htm, or call **703-324-5484** and leave your name and phone number.

Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, May 25-31

Plan to go shopping the last week of May, and you will save money on many useful items. Virginia's Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday is May 25-31. During that week, you can stock up on supplies for protecting your home and business during hurricane and flooding season. You also can add items to your family's emergency supply kit.

Retail outlets will have information about the tax holiday. For more information, go to www.tax.virginia.gov. For information about getting ready for hurricane and flooding season in Virginia, go to www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

Independent Living Project

Fairfax County's Independent Living Project is a free 6-week series of educational seminars, exercise classes for strength and balance, and home safety visits for adults 60 years and older and adults with physical disabilities.

The project will offer new programs in Mount Vernon and Falls Church this spring and summer. Preregistration is required and space is limited.

To register or for more information, contact Jennifer Edge at **703-324-7210**, email jennifer.edge@fairfaxcounty.gov, or register at www.tinyurl.com/6keebr2.

Free Low-Impact Aerobics

When: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays
8:30-9:30 a.m.

Where: Messiah United Methodist Church,
6215 Rolling Rd., Springfield

Contact: Barbara at **703-451-0388**.

May Gardening

by Joe Belsan

I'm going to have a new hand to help me in the garden in a few years. My new grandson was born on April 3. I'll have to be patient and look forward to him walking about picking the raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries in my garden.

I remember my own children walking in the garden picking peas, radishes, and fruits. That experience was what led me to practice organic gardening. All that "organic" gardening means is NOT using chemical fertilizers/weed killers. It means using exactly what nature provides us to improve the soil, which makes the plants healthier, and helps to fight off insects. From all that I've read and my own 40+ years of working the soil, the soil is the real basis for healthy plants.

I heard a news report the other day that the main ingredient used in the pain killer Tylenol was found in the feathers of chickens. And today, I read that the Department of Agriculture has issued a ban on chicken feed containing arsenic. Arsenic is a natural element found in soil but it is not a carcinogen. However, the arsenic found in the feed is a carcinogen. I reference these stories to highlight my concerns about the various chemicals being used to protect animals, increase veggie growth, and protect against bugs being ingested by the general public. I look at my new grandson and feel concerned about how these are affecting him as he is being breastfed. I think it's great that organically grown vegetables and animal products are now becoming competitive with nonorganic supermarket products.

Speaking of blueberries, all of my 15 or so plants are covered with blossoms and every time I hear of frost/freezing temps warnings,

my heart jumps and I go out and cover the plants with old sheets or the tissue-like product designed to protect against frost sold in local nurseries. I added some peat at a ratio of 1 part peat to 3 parts soil to acidify the soil, which the blueberry prefers. As soon as the weather becomes constant in temperature, I'll cover them with bird netting so I can enjoy my wife's delicious pies and jams.

I'll be returning to the Oakton Farmer's Market April 28 to answer garden questions and provide guidance in vegetable planting. I hope you will try to grow some in your own backyard or on the balcony of your residence. I look forward to meeting you.

Until next month, happy gardening!

Source: Joe Belsan is an organic gardener and a long-time resident of the City of Fairfax. He is a practicing Foodscaper who helps plan and implement edible gardens. He is at the Oakton Farmer's Market, on Hunter Mill Rd., on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. to answer questions. He may be contacted at foodscaper@hotmail.com.



Crafters are wanted for the Lorton Senior Center Advisory Council's Craft Sale. Rent table space and sell your authentic hand-crafted or original art work. Reserve your table space early for the sale that will be held on Saturday, November 3, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Lorton Senior Center, 7722 Gunston Plaza Lorton. For more information, call **703-550-7195**.



Ask an Expert: Questions & Answers

Provided by SeniorNavigator

To ask an expert about your aging concerns, visit www.seniornavigator.org.

Topic: Spring Cleaning/Home Safety Modifications

Question: Since spring is here, I would like to complete a home safety review in order to determine any potential dangers in my mom's house. I am not sure what I should be on the lookout for. Do you have any suggestions or tips?

Answer: Springtime is a great time to review the need for any home modifications and repairs your mother's home might need. A review of your mother's home can help to increase her safety and ability to age in place by safeguarding her independence. The U.S. Administration on Aging has a comprehensive safety checklist you can use to examine each area of your mother's home and assess it for potential problems. The checklist questions are as follows:

Appliances, Kitchen, Bathroom

- Are cabinet doorknobs easy to use?
- Are stove controls easy to use and clearly marked?
- Are faucets easy to use?
- Are there grab bars where needed?
- Are all appliances and utensils conveniently and safely located?
- Can the oven and refrigerator be opened easily?
- Can she sit down while working?
- Can she get into and out of the bathtub or shower easily?
- Is the kitchen counter height and depth comfortable for her?
- Is the water temperature regulated to prevent scalding or burning?
- Would she benefit from having convenience items, such as a handheld

showerhead, a garbage disposal, or a trash compactor?

Closets, Storage Spaces

- Are her closets and storage areas conveniently located?
- Are her closet shelves too high?
- Can she reach items in the closet easily?
- Does she have enough storage space?
- Has she gotten the maximum use out of the storage space she has, including saving space with special closet shelf systems and other products?

Doors, Windows

- Are her doors and windows easy to open and close?
- Are her door locks sturdy and easy to operate?
- Are her doors wide enough to accommodate a walker or wheelchair?
- Do her doors have peepholes?

Driveway, Garage

- Does her garage door have an automatic opener?
- Is her parking space always available?
- Is her parking space close to the entrance of her home?

Electrical Outlets, Switches, Safety Devices

- Are light or power switches easy to turn on and off?
- Are electrical outlets easy to reach?
- Are the electrical outlets properly grounded to prevent shocks?
- Are her extension cords in good condition?
- Can she hear the doorbell in every part of the house?
- Are there smoke detectors throughout her home?
- Is there an alarm system?

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Spring Cleaning *cont. from p. 12*

- Is the telephone readily available for emergencies?
- Would she benefit from having an assistive device to make it easier to hear and talk on the telephone?

Floors

- Are all of the floors in her home on the same level?
- Are steps up and down marked in some way?
- Are all floor surfaces safe and covered with nonslip or nonskid materials?
- Are there scattered rugs or doormats that could be hazardous?

Hallways, Steps, Stairways

- Are hallways and stairs in good condition?
- Do all of her hallways and stairs have smooth, safe surfaces?
- Do all of her stairs have steps that are big enough for her whole foot?
- Are there handrails on both sides of the stairway?
- Are her stair rails wide enough for her to grasp them securely?
- Would she benefit from building a ramp to replace the stairs or steps inside or outside of her home?

Lighting, Ventilation

- Are there nightlights where they are needed?
- Is the lighting in each room sufficient for the use of the room?
- Is the lighting bright enough to ensure safety?
- Is each room well-ventilated with good air circulation?

Once you have assessed all the areas of your mother's home, you will be able to determine which areas have any potential problems and identify possible solutions.

**TO ADD, CORRECT, OR DELETE YOUR NAME
FROM THE GOLDEN GAZETTE MAILING LIST,
CALL 703-324-5633.**

AARP 2-Day Driver Safety Classes

When: Thursday/Friday, May 17/18
9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Where: Greenspring Retirement Community,
7430 Spring Village Dr., Springfield

Cost: \$12/AARP members, \$14/nonmembers.
(Bring AARP card.) Checks made payable to AARP.

Register: Call **703-923-3131, ext. 604-4270.**

When: Monday/Wednesday, May 21/23
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Where: Oakton United Methodist Church, 2951
Chain Bridge Rd., Oakton

Cost: \$12/AARP members, \$14/nonmembers.
(Bring AARP card.) Checks made payable to AARP.

Register: Call **703-281-0538.**

When: Monday/Wednesday, May 21/23
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Where: Alexandria Police Department, 3600
Wheeler Ave., Alexandria

Cost: \$12/AARP members, \$14/nonmembers.
(Bring AARP card.) Checks made payable to AARP.

Register: Call **703-751-4585.**

**Health Insurance Questions?
Call the Virginia
Insurance Counseling &
Assistance Program (VICAP) at
703-324-5851.**

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

May 5. 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.. Designer Collection in a Pot. Create your own combination using a variety of Green Spring's favorite plants for your container. Our gardeners guide you through the process and give you tips for container magic. Simple container plants and soil included. \$45. Register at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring or call **703-642-5173**.

May 5. 10 a.m.-1p.m. Ellenor C. Lawrence Park Thirtieth Anniversary. Activities include homemade ice cream, farm animals, butter churning, nature hikes, costumed interpreters, colonial carpentry, guided nature and historical walks, and wagon rides. Free admission. Ellenor C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Rd., Chantilly. Call **703-631-0013**.

May 12. 10 a.m.-3 pm. Celebrate Communication 2012. Free expo for Northern Virginia's deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Hosted by the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons. Over 50 exhibitors, free hearing and vision testing, and more. Call Bonnie O'Leary at **703-352-9055 ext. 106** or email boleary@nvrc.org.

May 12. 8 p.m. Dancing Down Broadway. Shall We Dance? The City of Fairfax Band presents Broadway's musical trove of dance music and dance segments. The program features

dances from two Bernstein classics, *West Side Story* and *On the Town*, along with sequences from *Fiddler on the Roof* and other Broadway box office hits. \$11/seniors, \$17/adults. W.T. Woodson High School, 9525 Main St., Fairfax. Call **703-757-0220** or go to www.fairfaxband.org.

May 16. 1:30 p.m. Communications & Behaviors. Discussions on strategies for minimizing and dealing with challenging behaviors of persons with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's Family Day Center, 2812 Old Lee Highway, Suite 210, Fairfax. Call **703-204-4664** to RSVP.

May 20. 3 p.m. Woodbridge Flute Choir Spring Concert performs on flutes of all sizes from piccolo to contrabass flute. Four Spirituals and "Allegretto" from Symphony No. 7 are among the selections. Central Library, 8601 Mathis Ave., Manassas. Free. Call Debbie Gilbert at **540-347-5761**.

May 22. 11 a.m. -2 p.m. Life-long Leisure and Resource Expo. Visit with exhibitors and attend workshops to learn more about technology, home modifications, accessible design, nutrition and cooking, leisure and recreation activities, encore career options, financial and estate planning, and much more. Reston Community Center, Hunter Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Rd., Reston. Call **703-476-4500**.

Recycling Events

Document Shredding
Saturday, May 19,
8 a.m.-12 p.m.
Mason Governmental
Center
6507 Columbia Pike
Annandale

Electric Sunday TV
and Computer
Recycling
Sunday, May 20, 2-4 p.m.
I-66 Transfer Station
4618 West Ox Rd., Fairfax

For updates, cancellations, and notifications of events, call **703-324-5052**.



**Happy 36th
Birthday to the
Golden
Gazette!**

